

Clothe Yourselves with Humility

1 Peter 5:5-11

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 17, 2017

Well, good morning. You can go ahead and turn in your Bibles with me to the book of First Peter. And as you're doing that this morning, we are in a series called "The Suffering Church," where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering. We've been in this series since April and we're almost done. Like I said, next week is our Christmas Eve service, and the week after, Lyndon Unger will be preaching for us. I'll be out of town visiting the great state of Georgia, so you can pray for me. Georgia at Christmas gets pretty wild ... And after that, we'll come back, and finish it up. We have two more messages in this book, this one, and the next one, and then we're gonna wrap things up. But I hope this has been helpful for you. I've learned a lot. The neat thing about being a preacher, is that you get to study this stuff all week, and then come in here, and I get to present, tell you what I learned. I was gonna make the joke that I work one day a week, and okay, it was not a funny joke ... But I get to let it sink in and marinate in my soul Monday through Saturday, and then come in, and share it with you.

And one lesson that's stuck out with me, in this particular series, is that everyone suffers. Nobody gets out of this. There are no passes on the issue of pain. When we were moving to Canada back in January of this year, we were selling our home. And the day before we were supposed to close (some of you know this story) we found out that our septic system failed. I was gonna sign papers at 11:00 on a Wednesday morning, and at 8:00 that morning, I found out my septic system didn't work, and it had to be replaced, and I was flying out the next day to come here. And if you know anything about septic systems, it's thousands of dollars. It's a big deal. And when I found that out, my realtor, who was a Christian, tried to encourage me, and she said, "I know God wouldn't do this to you, because you're going to do His work." And she said, "I know that He won't let this happen to you, because you're going to serve Him." And I remember thinking, "Boy, it doesn't always work that way."

Christians suffer too. Those who are doing the Lord's work suffer as well. By the way, that all got taken care of. And I was gonna torch the house, but I didn't. I was patient. Suffering is unavoidable. But the good news is, that God will get us through it, amen? Amen? The good news is that He won't let you suffer alone. Corrie ten Boom said it this way, she said, "There's no pit so deep, that God is not deeper still." She said, "Whatever hole you're in, God will reach down into it and bring you out of it." It leads us to the book of First Peter. First Peter was written to Christians who were in a pit. It was written to believers who were living in a dark place, but in the midst of that, Peter says, "God is deeper still." "In the midst of their sorrow," he says, "God will reach down and pull them out of it."

And if you want to see this for yourself, let me just read our passage for you today, and we'll say a few words about it. If you look in First Peter, chapter 5, let's just read the whole chapter together. Peter says,

1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the

flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. 11 To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. 12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! 13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

Just to give you some background on this, First Peter has been called the "universal epistle", because it was written to Christians everywhere. In chapter 1:1 it says, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." I've told you before, that those provinces were located in a stretch of land between the Mediterranean and Black Sea called Asia Minor. It was about 300,000 square miles of territory. It's about the size of British Columbia, top to bottom. And at a time without modern travel and modern communication, this was much of the known world, or a big part of it, anyway. As a matter of fact, the Island of Crete was just off of Asia Minor. Rome was just off to the northwest. You had Jerusalem just to the southeast. Everything was kind of in this part of the world. And to bring these believers together from all these different territories, Peter talks about a topic they can all understand, the topic of suffering. No matter where you're from: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, you all suffer. Most of the letters in the New Testament are written to one area. This is interesting, 'cause First Peter was written to five. There're five provinces mentioned in here and he talks about something they can relate to.

In chapter 1, he says, "God will be with you in your suffering," that's how he starts the letter off. In chapter 2, he says, "God will be with you in your suffering with the government, and the workplace, and the home," he ties it into those areas. In chapter 3, he said, "Who is there to harm you, if you prove zealous for what is good?" Some say that's the main point of the letter. "Who is there to harm you, if God is on your side?" And in the final chapters 4-5, he applies this to our lives. As he's wrapping up the letter here, he's dropping in different applications for what he's talked about in the first several chapters. And he talks about persecution, and end times, and judgment; we've talked about those in the last couple weeks. He talks about fiery ordeals, and testing, and entrusting your souls to God. And then he says in chapter 5:1, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you," which as we talked about last time, sounds strange, because what do elders have to do with all this pain and suffering? And the answer is simple: when you're suffering, you need leaders to get you through it. You need elders to help you. You can't do it

alone. You're not strong enough. Peter says, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you to shepherd the flock of God."

And then he says, in verse 5 (this is all background for our passage) "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you clothe yourselves with humility..." In other words, be humble in how you respond to your elders. Be humble in how you let them lead you when you're suffering. Don't be proud. Don't be puffed up. Don't say, "I can do this on my own. I don't need your help." He says, "Be humble." As many of you know, suffering is a very humbling thing. I don't know if you've spent time in the hospital lately, but hospitals are very humbling places, aren't they? Nobody goes to the hospital ... You go in with balloons, but you don't come out with balloons usually. It's hard to suffer. It can be embarrassing; it can be humiliating. If you suffer like Peter talks about in chapter 4, if you're slandered and reviled for being a Christian, it's even worse, or it can be just as worse. And some people resent that, and they get proud. They say, "I don't need your help. I don't have to listen to my leaders. I can do it on my own." And Peter says here, "You shouldn't talk that way when you're suffering. You need to be humble."

They told us in seminary that, "You can't knock a man down who's an inch tall." And that's how you get through suffering, by being an inch tall, by being low to the ground. You can't stand tall all the time. You can't hold your head high when you're in pain. During the Civil War, the Union General John Sedgwick was inspecting his troops right before a battle and they told him to kneel, because he was too close to the enemy. And his famous last words were, "Nonsense, they couldn't hit an elephant at this ..." He was shot during the middle of the sen... Okay, alright... Anyway, the point is, if you want to serve... You guys are looking at me like, "Well, finish the sentence." That was the end of the sentence ... He was shot during his statement there ... Because he didn't kneel. The point is, if you want to survive, you've got to kneel. You've got to be low to the ground, which is something the Bible tells us over and over again. On page, after page, after page of Scripture, the Scriptures tell us to be humble.

We live in a world that's interesting, that values self-esteem. If you just think about some of the terms we use: self-pity, self-goals, self-worth, self-hate, self-love. Do you know what all those terms have in common? They're all self-ish. The Bible doesn't tell you to hate yourselves. It doesn't tell you to love yourself. It just tells you not to think about yourselves all the time. It tells you to be humble. Just a couple of passages that talk about this, Jesus said in Luke 14:11, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted." You see the flip there? If you stand tall, you will be shot down in the eyes of God. In Matthew 5:3, He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He doesn't say, "Blessed are the rich in spirit," He doesn't say, "Blessed are the proud," He says, "Blessed are the poor." Matthew 18, He says, "Truly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." It says in Psalm 18:27, "For you save a humble people, but the proud you will abase." And you see this kind of thing over and over again in Scripture, humility is the foundation for everything. You can't have a relationship with God, if you are not humble.

I'm always amazed at people that have a hard time saying, "I'm wrong," because the three words you have to say to be converted, or to start the process, anyway, is, "I am wrong." "In the eyes of

God, I have sinned." That's how you are saved, and you come to Christ for forgiveness. Humility is the foundation for everything.

It might be helpful to look at this a little bit from the Bible's perspective before we jump into our passage. Let me talk about this from a big picture perspective, and then we'll narrow it down to our passage. But when you look at humility from the Bible's perspective, and tie it into suffering, you learn a couple things. One thing is this, you learn that you need to be humble, because God does not owe you an explanation for your suffering. Does that make sense? Does everybody get that? You've got to be humble in this, because God does not owe you an explanation for your suffering. When we suffer, we want God to give us answers. We want to know why this is happening, and what's going on, and why, why, why? And the Bible says, "God doesn't owe us that." If you remember, when he suffered, Job wrestled with this. You read the first 39 chapters of Job and it's basically the question, "WHY?" In capital letters for 39 chapters. And at the end of all those chapters, what does God say to Job? He says, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" He says, "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?" In other words, "Job, you don't have the right to question me." He didn't say that to be mean to Job. He didn't say that to be cruel. He said that to state some facts: "Job, here's the facts. I am God and you are man. I'm the Creator and you're the creature. You don't have the right to demand an explanation." If you remember in Second Corinthians 12, Paul had the same problem, he had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment him, and three times, he asked the Lord to take it away, and what does God do? God says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." And that's all He said. And Paul had to be humble to hear that.

It leads to another thing the Bible says about humility, and this one is probably a little harder to hear, but it's Biblical, and that is this: we have to be humble, because we don't deserve better than this. I think when we suffer, we often ... It's harder for us, because we think we deserve better. The Bible says, "We don't deserve better." That doesn't mean it's your fault for suffering. Maybe it is, maybe it's not. I don't know the circumstances. I'm not saying God is punishing you. Maybe He's not punishing you. Maybe there's something else going on in your suffering. But the fact remains in Scripture, is that whatever you're going through, God is being kind to you, because you deserve to go to hell. If we were talking about what you deserve, we deserve to be punished eternally for our sins.

I remember when I was in Los Angeles. I served in a singles ministry for people in their 20s and some of them really wrestled with being single. They wanted to be married. They didn't want to be alone. And we heard them say quite often, "I don't deserve this. I deserve better." And very kindly and graciously, we would tell them, "No, you don't, you deserve to go to hell. That's what you deserve. That's what you have earned. But the grace of God allows you to still be single, so praise Him. That's all you have to worry about." Praise God, the only thing you have to worry about is a broken septic system, amen? Praise God, the only thing you have to worry about is that poor health or a poor job. It could be much, much worse, and you have to be humble to acknowledge that as well.

They say, "If you take a group of people, and put 'em in a building, and tell 'em it's a hotel, they'll complain. But if you take another group of people, and put 'em in the building, and tell 'em it's a prison, they won't complain. Friends, we should all be in prison for our sins. We should be

locked up forever, but we're not. We're free, because of what Christ has done for us. Our debt has been paid, our sins are washed away, so you should never, ever, ever complain. Charles Spurgeon said, "As long as a man is alive and out of hell, he has no reason to complain, ever."

Which leads to one more thing the Bible says about this, and we'll dive into our passage here, but we've already talked about it, that is, you need to be humble, because everyone suffers, and that includes you and me. Everyone experiences pain and none of us are exempt from this. Job, talking about the Book of Job, Job 5:7, says, "As sparks fly upward, so man is born for trouble." And the idea there is, just as sparks go up, so we're going to suffer. Job 14:1 says, "Our lives are short lived and full of trouble, but the good news is that God will get us through it. The good news is that you won't suffer alone, if you're humble." That's the kicker. God will be with you, if you are low to the ground.

And that leads us to our passage. By the way, before we get to our passage, I have to tell you this story. If you guys read "The Grace for Your Day," you'll remember this story. But in his autobiography, Benjamin Franklin tells of the time he was visiting the New England preacher, Cotton Mather. And as they were leaving his house, they had to exit through a room with a low ceiling. And as they did, Cotton Mather shouted at him, "Stoop! Stoop!" But it was too late, Benjamin Franklin smacked his head on a rafter hanging down. And after he did, the famous preacher told Benjamin Franklin, he said, "You are young and you have the world before you, but if you stoop as you go through it, you will miss many a hard knock." I wish I was a preacher then. I could just fire off cool things like that, when people hit their heads on stuff. The Bible says the same thing to you this morning, "If you stoop, you will miss many a hard knock. If you stay low, you're gonna miss a lot of pain." And that leads us to our passage.

If you're taking notes in First Peter 5:5-11 (all that was background for our text) in First Peter 5:5-11, Peter tells us to prepare for suffering by humbling ourselves in some key areas, some key places in life. And the first one is with our leadership. You could also say with others, but in the passage, it ties off of leadership. The first area we need to be humble is with leaders. Peter has just mentioned elders in the first part of chapter 5, and now, he tells us to be humble with them. And if you read in chapter 5:5, it says, "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders."

A couple of things about this, that phrase "younger men" here, is neutral in Greek, which means it refers to any young person, man or woman, any youth or young adult. And he mentions them, because young people can really struggle with suffering. It's always interesting when you see a famous young person die on the news, it's such a big deal, but you see a famous older person die, it's not such a big deal, 'cause we don't think the young will ever die. It can be really hard for them. Peter singles them out here, and then he goes on to say, "This is a problem for everybody, because," he says, "And all of you," in verse 5, "clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'"

Peter says, "Clothe yourselves." That phrase refers to a slave putting an apron around his waist as he went to work, and the idea is that it covered his body. And in a similar way, Peter says, "You should clothe yourselves with humility towards one another." Just as a slave cover their body with their apron, you should do to your soul with humility. When people look at you, they should see a humble person. You guys know there's people you look at them and they just ooze pride.

Peter says, "As a Christian, you should ooze humility," because here's the reason why in the verse, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." That's a quotation from Proverbs 3:34. As you can see, any time you see something capitalized in your Bibles like this, it's a reference to a quotation from the Old Testament, but it means God is against the proud. He is their enemy. John Calvin says, "God has two hands here: One to beat down the proud and one to lift up the humble. So let this be a thunderbolt to keep you humble. Let it be a wake-up call to keep you from pride." Matthew Henry says, "There's a mutual opposition between God and the proud, because they have different priorities. They have different goals in mind."

It's been said, "You can't put two kings on the throne. One of them is gonna get on, the other one's gonna get off." It's gonna be you or God. Peter says, "Make sure it's God." You know those people who say, "God helps those who help themselves?" They have no idea what they're talking about. God helps the humble. God helps those who acknowledge that they can't help themselves. Those people who say, "Just believe in yourself and God will take care of you," it's the same thing. You should not believe in yourself. You should believe in God, which is important to mention, because suffering can really make you forget this. It can puff you up with pride. It can make you say, "I don't have to listen to you. You don't know what I'm going through. You have no idea what this is like. I'm the one who's hurting. I'm the one who's in pain. I, I, I, I."

I saw a cartoon the other day that had the World War I generation and it said, "We fought a world war." And just below that, it had the World War II generation, and it said, "We fought a world war." And just below that, it had my generation, and it said, "We're offended." I can pick at my generation, so it's okay, but that's our war. Someone hurt our feelings. Well, that's because we're proud. And we say, "Because of that, nobody can boss us around, because I've been hurt." I talked to someone recently, who was of this opinion. They were hurting. They were offended by something I said or by the fact that we teach the doctrine of hell here at Grace Fellowship. They didn't like that. And every time I tried to explain what I was thinking, or our position, they said, "I'm offended," as if that meant, "I'm right and you cannot talk anymore," or, "I'm hurt, so I have ultimate moral authority in this conversation." And Peter says, "You can't think that way when you're suffering. You can't be proud. You still have to be humble." And here's why, because no one thinks very clearly when they suffer, amen? Am I the only one? Nobody thinks very clearly when they're in pain. And you have to be humble to let other people talk to you.

I talked with a man in Indiana some years ago who was struggling with sin. He couldn't get victory over it. It was taking a hold of him. And he asked me, if he should go into the ministry to help with that sin, 'cause he wasn't thinking clearly. They call that running to the cloth, by the way, there's a term for that. It was clouding his judgment. I talked with other people who want to get out of a marriage, because the marriage is bad, or they want to give up on their family, because their kids are bad. You have to say the same thing and they have to be humble to hear it. We all have to do that. All of us think poorly when we suffer. We struggle with that. And if someone doesn't point it out to us, we can get in all kinds of trouble. In his book on humility, C. J. Mahaney tells the story of watching a man eat at a restaurant who had a fancy suit, and wingtip shoes, and a Rolex watch, and a nice trimmed moustache with cream cheese all over it. And he said, "It was the weirdest thing, seeing this guy that was dressed, hundreds of dollars on his clothes, and all this, and there's just a big smudge of cream cheese on his face." And he said, "We all have cream cheese on our face." We all have sinned, we all have problems, we're all

doing something wrong, and someone has to tell us, but we have to be humble enough to hear it. We have to be low enough to listen. You can't just say, "I'm offended, so I have ultimate authority in this conversation," or, "I'm hurt, so you can't tell me what to do." You have to be humble. You have to stoop in the eyes of God. Andrew Murray says, "Humility before God is nothing, if it's not proved in humility before men." It's in our relationship to one another, in our treatment of one another, the true lowliness of mind and lowliness of heart can be seen.

And it leads to the next area where you need to be humble in your suffering, and that is in the area of anxiety. You need to be humble with leaders, or with others, and you need to be humble with anxiety. As Peter is wrapping up this letter, as I just mentioned, he's giving you just application after application. He's just tying it all off and he mentions this, very important, because as you know, when you suffer, it makes you anxious. It makes you worried. You wonder, "When's this gonna end? How bad is this gonna be?" And I've talked to people that were going to doctors, and the greatest concern they had was, "What am I about to hear? Getting these tests done, I'm getting this information brought in, what's going on?" Doctors often say that ... They talk about the stress that suffering brings to the body, and they say, a lot of that stress is mental. A lot of it is anxious stress. Peter says, "You have to be humble with that too. You need to trust in God. You don't trust in yourself when you're suffering, you trust in God." And if you read in verses 6-7, he says, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."

Now, if you're talking about God opposing the proud and giving grace to the humble, Peter says, "If you are humble, God will exalt you at the proper time." You guys remember the passage that says, "The last shall be first, first shall be last?" Same idea. If you're low to the ground, if you lower yourselves under His hand, He will pick you up when He's ready, when the time is right. "But in the meantime," Peter says, "You should cast your anxiety on Him."

That phrase "casting your anxiety" is an interesting one in Greek, because it literally means to throw it on Him, to toss it on Him like a blanket. I think there's other passages and Scripture that talk about tossing a net, tossing a blanket, and the idea is you toss your anxiety on God, because He's big enough to handle it. You toss your worries on Him, because He is strong enough to deal with it. We're often anxious, because we think we're strong enough to handle our problems. We're strong enough to control it. We don't need any help. Peter says, "You do. Give your problems to God." Jesus said something to this effect in Matthew 11 when He said, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." And I like that word "yoke" there, 'cause it refers to the harness that was put on an ox to help him pull a load. And Jesus says, "My harness is light, so take it upon you. It won't hurt your shoulders. Why? Because I bear the weight of it. Because I pull too." In fact, Jesus pulls all the load, if you let Him. Peter says the same thing. Yeah, I talk to people that, they wrestle with anxiety, and they say ... Well, it goes back to that same problem of I, I, I, I. The problem when you are anxious, is that you're thinking about "I" too much. You need to think about the Lord.

And Peter says ... He says this in verse 7, "Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." That's why you do this here. God is not a distant God in the clouds, throwing lightning bolts at you when you mess up. He's not a spoiled little child playing chess with the universe. He cares about you. He loves you, so you can trust Him. Cast your anxiety on Him. They say that,

"The only thing lying at the bottom of the ocean is a nervous wreck." And the only thing lying at the bottom of your anxiety is a nervous wreck. Anxiety doesn't help you at all, does it? It gives you indigestion, it keeps you up all night. You guys know what this is like. You worry, and worry, and worry about something, until you blow it way out of proportion. You take a problem that's this big, and by the end of your worry, it's this big. You take a problem that's gonna actually take about, what, an hour of your time this week? And you spend about 40 hours worrying about it. Because you don't trust God; you don't think He cares about you. He does care about you. He will take care of you. Studies have been done on this. They found that 40% of the things we worry about never happen, 30% of them couldn't be changed anyway, whether we worried about them or not, 12% are lies, things that just aren't true, and 10% of the things we worry about is our health, which only gets worse with worry. So don't be anxious. Trust God with your problems.

By the way, this is a lesson Peter really struggled with. If you remember your Bible history, when he was walking on water, Peter looked down at his feet, because he was what? He was anxious. Any of you ever walked on water before? I'm sure it's pretty nerve wracking. This is not the frozen water that we see around here in Canada; this is the liquid stuff. Another time, He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was arrested, same thing, he panicked. He pulls out his sword, he cuts off the high priest's servant's ear, because he was anxious, but he wasn't aiming for the guy's ear. Nobody tries to cut off somebody's ear. He was aiming for his neck. The guy ducked, he got his ear. But Peter says here, he says, "As I reflect back on my life, let me give you a very simple lesson: Cast your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you, even when you're suffering, even when you're in pain."

And that leads to the next area where you need to be humble. And this is a big one, and it's probably interesting. If you've read the book of First Peter, this is one of those verses you read and you go, "Huh, what's this about?" But the next one area where you need to be humble is with the devil. You need to be humble with leadership, humble with anxiety, and third, you need to be humble with the devil. Now, this is interesting, but the progression of thought here is, as he's closing the letter, Peter goes from leadership, to anxiety over suffering, to the devil, because the devil tempts you to be anxious. That's the progression of thought here. Satan is the one who encourages you to be worried and afraid. He says, "Is God really that strong? Can He really carry your burdens? Does God really care about you? Is He really concerned?" Peter addresses that here in verse 8, he says, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Peter says, "You shouldn't be anxious," but on the flip side, "You should be sober and alert." Nobody sleeps with the devil on the prowl. Nobody sleeps with a lion lurching around.

The word "devil" here is the Greek word *diabolos*, which means "slanderer" or "liar". And the word "adversary" means "opponent". The idea is that the devil slanders you, because he's your opponent. He lies to you, because he hates you. He hates God, and he hates anything connected to God, and since you're God's child, and believe in Him, he hates you. A friend of mine said it this way, he said, "The devil and the demons, they party with the world, but they get to work in the church."

Peter says, "Not only that, but he wants to devour you," or, "gulp you down," in the Greek. He doesn't want a nibble; he wants to swallow you whole. The seriousness of this is lost in translation. When you think of lions today, we often think of those cute, furry animals in the zoo, or the Disney characters that sing and dance, that kind of stuff. In Peter's day, lions literally ate people. They devoured them. Christians were torn apart by lions in the Colosseum, in different parts of Israel. When you were in the countryside, there was danger of being attacked by wild lions. And with that same imagery, Peter says, "The devil is trying to swallow you with lies. He's prowling around looking for someone to pick off and destroy." Peter says in verse 9, (here's a solution) "But resist him, firm in your faith."

The word "your faith" there could be translated "the faith", "the Christian faith," it's a reference to Scripture. You resist the devil by standing firm in Scripture. You resist his lies by standing firm on the truth of the Word of God. When you wrestle with anxiety, when the devil says to you, "Is God really that strong?" You turn in your Bibles to Luke 1:37, which says, "For nothing is impossible with God," and you say, "Yes, He is. God is the strongest thing in the universe. I can trust Him." When you worry, and worry, and worry, and fret, and fret, and fret, and stay up all night, you turn to passages like Second Samuel 22:2, "The Lord is my rock and my deliverer," and you trust in that, and you repent of the anxiety. When Satan says, "Does God really care?" You turn to Romans 8:28, which says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose." And you say, "Of course, He cares. Absolutely, He does." You defeat the devil by standing on the truth.

I grew up in a church ... Or, I grew up around churches, that they taught that you defeat the devil, or you defeat the demonic forces with your feelings. You feel really bad this way, but you wait for the presence of God in your heart to feel good, then you go this way with God. The problem with that, is the devil can make you feel real good. You guys get that? Sin can feel real good; that's the problem with sin. If it always felt bad, you would never do it. Peter says, "You need to stand on something outside of your feelings and that is the Word of God. That's how you defeat the devil."

Another way to look at this, is you don't defeat the devil by attacking him, you defeat him by resisting him. It's a defensive position, not an offensive one. It's a resistance, not an assault. What I mean by that, is one of my professors in seminary tells a story about watching a preacher on TV say, "Satan, we hate you. Satan, we can't stand you, and we're gonna defeat you." And my professor said, "That man was talking to the devil." He said, "That man was praying to Satan and nowhere in Scripture are you ever told to pray to the devil." I've heard other guys say, "We should tear down his strongholds, force him out of hiding. We should get our weapons and kill him." That's not what this is saying. It says to resist. You stand firm on the Bible and let God get the victory. Stand firm in Scripture and God will protect you. He'll do the killing. He'll take care of the devil. I was watching some of our young people play basketball last Sunday, and in basketball, there's a rule called the charge. And in the charge, the idea is that, if someone is coming at you with the ball, and they hit you, but you don't move, you win, because they draw a foul. And they have to turn the ball over to you. Peter says, "That's how you respond to the devil. When he comes at you, you stand firm and you will win. You don't move and God will give you the victory." I think in hockey, if someone hits you, you guys just get into a fight, so that's a little different, hockey, but...

Well, he says in verse 9, he goes on and says this, he said, "But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." Going back to what we keep saying this morning, is everyone suffers, everyone experiences pain, and this is more of the hope you can have, is that whatever you're going through, you can know other people are going through it too. This idea that, "Nobody knows what I'm going through," Peter says, "They do." He says, "Lots of people do." He says, "The same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." And going back to what we said about the background of this book, this book is written to all these provinces in Asia Minor, and Peter says, "Look, all of you guys are going through this." He says, "It's not like I'm gonna write this letter to Cappadocia, and they're having a wonderful time, and the people in Bithynia are hurting, they're all hurting. The suffering is going on for everybody, so hang in there together and don't give up," is the idea. "There's strength in numbers. Stand firm, together with your brethren."

It leads to one more area where you need to be humble in your suffering. You need to be humble with leaders, humble with anxiety, humble with the devil, but here's one more, 'cause it all boils down to this: You need to be humble with God Himself. That's how Peter ties this off here. It all comes back to your relationship with God; it all comes back to how you see Him. I think you guys understand this, but humble people have a high view of God and a low view of themselves, not the other way around. Maybe another way to say that is, "Humble people like to talk about God much more than they talk about themselves." It's a more enjoyable subject to them. They put God up on His throne; they let God have the glory and the victory. That's what Peter says next, in verses 10-11. He says, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen."

If you noticed, Peter says several things about God here. By the way, he starts off the letter by talking about the foreknowledge of God the Father, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit in chapter 1:1-2, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and he finishes the letter with God again.

And here in verse 10, he calls Him, "The God of all grace." "After you've suffered for a little while, have suffered at the hands of Satan, suffered with anxiety and fear, the God of all grace," meaning the God of every grace, grace for every fight, "Who called you to His eternal glory, called you to heaven," salvific calling is the idea, "will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." Those are four verbs that have a unique connection to suffering. Just walk you through each of them: "Perfect" means "to restore something that is broken or to repair it". Many of you know, when you suffer, you are broken. Peter says here, with this verb, that, "God will put you back together again." He will "confirm you", which means "to stabilize you". Suffering is a very un-stabilizing thing; it shakes you up. Peter says, "God will calm you down." "Strengthen" means just what it says, "to strengthen someone, to give them power that they don't have", power to defeat the devil, power to defeat anxiety, power to get through this. And "establish" means "to put something on a strong foundation". The idea with that last word is, "God will give you a place to stand in the midst of your suffering." God will restore you, calm you down, make you strong, and help you to stand. I believe it's the book of Joel that says, "God will restore the years the locusts have eaten."

If you guys have ever been through suffering, sometimes you look back on it and you wonder, "What was that all about?" And, "Why did it go on so long?" And, "What's the deal, God? I feel like I didn't do anything. I slept for weeks. I was in the hospital for weeks. What was the point?" Well, you may not know the point, but Peter says here that, "God will restore the years you lost, if you're humble." That's what it all boils down to at the end of the day: He will do all of this, if you're humble.

Verse 11 says, "To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen." "Dominion" there is a word meaning "domination". God dominates everything, so He will do all of this. He rules over it all, so He will take care of you, but you have to be low to the ground. You have to put God on His throne.

King Louis the 14th of France was the longest reigning monarch of any European nation from the Middle Ages until today. He began his rule at the age of four and it finished at the age of 76. He ruled for 72 years. He was so successful that his people took to calling him "Louis Dieudonné" or "The Gift of God". And they called him "The Sun King", because he brought the sun and light to France. But unfortunately, it went to his head, and at his funeral, at his request, all the lights were extinguished in the Notre Dame Cathedral, except for one single, solitary candle that was placed on his coffin, to symbolize that the light of France was gone. The Sun King had died, but if that wasn't weird enough ... Sitting in a funeral in the dark is pretty weird... If that wasn't weird enough, the presiding minister approached the coffin, and he looked at the candle, and, "Whoo!" Blew it out. And he said into the darkness that, "Only God is great. Only God is great." Friends, that's what Peter is saying in this passage, "Only God is great." It's what he's saying in the book, really. Nothing compares to Him. He's the true Sun King. He is the ruler of heaven and earth, and the only way you'll get through any of your problems in life is to acknowledge that. The only way you're gonna survive is to ask for His help and admit you can't do it on your own. You don't have the strength to defeat anxiety, you don't have the strength to defeat the devil, you don't have the strength to spot the cream cheese on your face, but God does, if you will trust Him. Will you do that today? Will you put God on His throne? If you do, He will perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. I guarantee it. He will have dominion, forever and ever.

By the way, this is Christmas time and there's nothing more humble than the Son of God coming to live among us, as David Scott just said a moment ago. People often talk about how humble it was for the Son of God to be born in a manger. Let me tell you something. It was humble for the Son of God to be born at all. If He was born in a palace, that would be humiliating for Him. But He did it to save you, He did it to give you eternal life. When we come back next week, we're gonna talk about that. We have the Christmas Eve service with special music from our worship team and children's ministry. By the way, anytime you get the kids up here to sing, it's precious, isn't it? I always cross my fingers, to see if they're gonna do something really interesting when they're up here. But you don't want to miss that. That'll be a blessing. And afterwards, I'll be giving a Gospel message to tell you why Jesus came, but I could tell you right now, in one word. The answer is the word "humility". He humbled Himself, so we could be saved. He came down here, so we could go up there and be with God. And if He did that, then we could be humbled today, amen? We could lower ourselves.

Let me close us in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for what Your Son has done on the cross to save us. Lord, we thank you that He was humble, so that we could have eternal life. Lord, it is by Your mercy that we are saved. It is by Your grace that we enter heaven. It's nothing we do of ourselves. And we thank you for this reminder in First Peter. Maybe, if we could say we thank you for the reminder of why we suffer sometimes. Sometimes we suffer, so we will be humble and remember that You are on the throne. Lord, I pray for any of my brothers and sisters in Christ this morning who are going through a tough time, that this passage would encourage them to turn to You and think of you in the midst of their pain.

I pray for, if there are any here today who are lost, and they don't know Christ, and they read all this talk about the devil, and talk about anxiety, and it really, really concerns them. Lord, I pray you would draw them to Your Son. Humble them and let them know what Jesus came to do in providing salvation for lost sinners.

Father, we thank you for this time. We pray you have been glorified in it. As we approach Christmas next week, may You be honoured, as we remember Your Son's birth. And we pray this all in His name. Amen.